

Sketch

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7633 South Shore Drive

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Anna Leahy

7633 South Shore Drive

for Dan

In 1970, Lake Michigan was ours,
separated from my red-trimmed white stucco
and from your brownstone
only by the park
where you gave me my first cigarette
on the swings with the black rubber seats.
The two of us went swimming in double
layers of underwear; no worry
about orange-peel thighs,
suits cut too high
or too low,
only worry that you could tell
it was pre-teen bra and underpants.

Our houses were separated
only by my garden of marigolds and a peach tree
and by the row of white birches
under which we found the box turtle;
we taunted it for most of an afternoon,
clicking a stick on its back,
waiting for it to peek its appendages out,
clicking a stick again.

At five, we were married
in a technicolor Polaroid,
a white slip over my head,
my hands folded over yellow paper flowers,
your knees covered by navy knickers,
our sisters leading us down the living room aisle.
It was so easy to fall in love then.

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At six, we overdosed behind my bathroom door
on chewable vitamins, like candy
squirrelled-away for an afternoon's feast;
I hoarded the pink, cherry flavored Flintstones,
you swallowed indiscriminately.
Willy Mae found us in time,
wrapped us in diapers,
sent you home,
and put me to bed.
We spent three days in bed,
recovering from our shared banquet.

You moved to Beverly;
we only saw each other for Jack-in-the-Box
or Purple Cow where the world was purple—
purple sugar, purple candy, purple walls,
the color of kings and queens.

Although our mothers exchange Christmas cards,
I've lost track of who you are.
I have moved to the middle of Iowa
and have fallen in love
with a man who has never tapped the back of a turtle
and I have kept the only picture ever taken
of just the two of us.